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File SE 0710 In Line 3rd

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LAOS

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Customs officials at the border checkpoint said the 1,000 corrugated iron sheets and 25 engine spareparts exported to Cambodia were valued at 40,000 baht while the Cambodian truck carrying 1,000 kilos of dry fish was officially valued at 40,000 baht although the real market value is estimated to be 70,000 baht.

The usual lull yesterday was due to Thai traders' uncertainty over the regulations but it is expected that the border trade would be more active today.

The entire day was uneventful except for an incident in the morning when a group of Thai and foreign cameramen walked a few feet across the bridge into Cambodian territory triggering off a sudden uproar among a small group of Khmer Rouge soldiers standing guard there. The Khmer Rouge soldiers rushed to the border point, readied their guns in a firing position. This sent the five cameramen dashing back into Thai territory in a split second.

Meanwhile, five different groups of traders at this border town are expected to set up a joint trading firm.

DEPUTY MINISTER DISCUSSES LAO BORDER OPENINGS

Bangkok Domestic Service in English 0000 GMT 31 Aug 76 BK

[Text] At the National Assembly building yesterday morning, Mr Chusa-nga Bitthiprasat, one of the deputy interior ministers, noted that certain border points along the Thai-Lao border should be regarded as sensitive and if they were opened, Thailand would be strategically at a disadvantage. Those indicated by the deputy interior minister were in the area between Loei down to Ubon Ratchathani, especially in that part near Phetchabun and Phitsanulok near Khao Kho where a number of communist strongholds are situated.

Mr Chusa-nga also voiced the view that no checkpoint should be opened at Mek point, which is in Ubon Ratchathani, and for this he gave a similar reason, namely, it would be hard for the Thai Government to control the border crossings and he added that on strategic grounds it should not be opened at that point.

New checkpoints to be opened, Mr Chusa-nga said, should be thoroughly considered by the foreign, defense and interior ministries and the National Security Council. The deputy interior minister was of the opinion that the border point which is the most easily controlled is the one in Chiang Khong district in Chiang Rai Province.

POST URGES OPENING MORE BORDER POINTS

Bangkok POST in English 31 Aug 76 p 6 BK

[Editorial: "Remove More Barriers"]

[Text] The cabinet is holding its regular weekly meeting today and it must be sure to make a decision on the opening of more crossing points along the Laotian border. This matter which should have been taken up last Tuesday has been delayed for far too long since the return of the Thai delegation to Vientiane led by Foreign Minister Phichai Rattakun. The government declined to open more than the two border points already in use before the delegation left for Laos, in order that the question could become a point of negotiation between our two governments. It was also stated that the government would wait to find out what sort of welcome the Laotian Government would give to our officials and what sort of attitude it would adopt towards our country. All these are sensible precautions but the time has now come to make a decision.

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Evidently, it was not all sweetness and light at the negotiations. It appears that hard words were exchanged, but that is natural since the talk was supposed to be frank and open-hearted but, generally, it may be stated that the Laotian authorities would like to improve their relations with Thailand in the hope of getting more aid and cooperation from us. We should not be overly concerned with the communist nature of the Laotian Government but we should nurture the inherent racial and cultural affinities of the Laotian people to us. It should be part of our strategy to encourage the Laotian people to be friendly and sympathetic towards us. We do not want to push them into a corner where they will turn to a third country, which may not serve our best interests.

The Laotian people are suffering as a consequence of the closing of the border because they are dependent on food and other essentials from Thailand. The Soviets and the Vietnamese have been unable to fill the needs of the Laotian people. At the same time, our own farmers would like to sell their surplus glutinous rice, vegetables, livestock and other products. The Thai and the Laotian peoples living along the Mekong River are closely related through marriage and through constant communication across the boundary. A physical barrier placed between our two peoples is an artificial one and cannot be easily maintained.

We recognise the necessity for measures to be taken to prevent infiltration and subversion, gun-running and smuggling. Joint security patrol of the Mekong may be an important requisite to safeguard the national interests of both countries. If assurance can be made about border security, there should be no problem about the opening of more border crossing points. Laos has shown good faith by declaring with Thailand that the Mekong River is a river of peace to be used for the benefit of both countries, and the Laotian Government has also shown willingness to renegotiate the border treaty forced upon Thailand by the French. Let us encourage them along this line of positive thinking.

The way we can do this is to open at least two more border points along the Mekong River. The crossing points should be chosen to serve large populated areas of Laos so that the move would benefit the greatest number of people. The points should also be along the river rather than on land, in order to facilitate patrolling and inspection. If there is no stop to infiltration and other illegal activities which affect the security and sovereignty of Thailand or Laos, the points should be closed again. However, if the results of the opening of these two new border points are satisfactory to both sides, the resumption of traffic through additional points may be considered.

BUDGET COMMITTEE SLASHES ALLOCATIONS; ISOC FUNDS CUT

Bangkok POST in English 31 Aug 76 p 1 BK

[Text] The Budget Scrutiny Committee has slashed over 231 million baht and shelved over 1,000 million baht allocated to several ministries after meeting a total of 15 times since the House of Representatives passed the bill at its first reading some 3 weeks ago, House committee Spokesman Chaiwat Trisuran said yesterday.

Chaiwat said that budgetary slashes included those of the central fund, the State Universities Bureau, the prime minister's office, the Finance Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, the Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry and the Communications Ministry.

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SENI DISCUSSES THANOM, VIETNAMESE ISSUES

Bangkok Domestic Service in Thai 0000 GMT 31 Aug 76 BK

[Excerpts] Prime Minister Seni Pramot told newsmen yesterday evening that he had met with Commander Yutthaphong Kittikhachon, the son of Field Marshal Thanom, and was informed that the former prime minister wished to return to Thailand as a Buddhist novice. However, he said he had told Commander Yutthaphong that he could make no decision before listening to a cabinet resolution scheduled to be adopted at today's meeting.

The prime minister said the foreign minister had consulted with him on the incident in which some Thai people in Sakon Nakhon and other provinces bullied Vietnamese refugees. The prime minister revealed that the governments of Thailand and Vietnam are now negotiating the repatriation of the refugees, and he felt that something must be done to prevent the situation from deteriorating. However, he pointed out that the government would soon issue a statement to inform the public on this matter. He also said that this problem might be discussed in today's cabinet meeting.

AMBASSADOR IN SINGAPORE TO WATCH THANOM

Bangkok Domestic Service in Thai 1300 GMT 30 Aug 76 BK

[Text] Foreign Minister Phichai Rattakun disclosed that according to the latest report, as of yesterday, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhachon is still in Singapore. He said he has instructed the Thai ambassador in Singapore to report on all Thanom's movements and to inform Thanom that his return to Thailand is very undesirable at this time. He said he sympathized with Thanom, who wants to attend his sick father personally. However, if his return would cause an incident, he should not return for the sake of the country.

MINISTERS COMMENT ON POSSIBLE THANOM RETURN

Bangkok Domestic Service in English 0000 GMT 31 Aug 76 BK

[Excerpt] Different opinions have been voiced over the proposed return to Thailand sought by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhachon, the former prime minister, now in exile in Singapore.

Air Chief Marshal Thawi Chunlasap, the deputy prime minister and minister of public health, saw no point in preparing for preventive measures but said that the matter depended on the decision of the ministerial council.

Maj Gen Praman Adireksan, deputy premier and minister of agriculture and cooperatives, stated that according to the constitution, Field Marshal Thanom has the right to return and, from the point of view of Buddhism, it is possible that the exiled premier could come back after his ordination as a novice. Asked about any fear of unrest upon his return, Maj Gen Praman said that if this did happen, it would have to be caused by certain groups of people, not by the government.

PHICHAIR DISCUSSES CAMBODIAN TRADE, VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

Bangkok Domestic Service in Thai 0530 GMT 30 Aug 76 BK

[Text] Foreign Minister Phichai Rattakun spoke to newsmen on Lao and Cambodian border problems;

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[Begin recording] [Phichai] The border has been opened for trade with Cambodia. This opening is solely for trade purposes, not for individual transit. Cambodia wants our goods and we want Cambodian goods.

[Question] On what level will trade be conducted?

[Answer] The Cambodian Government handles trade on their side. Trade is handled on our side by private individuals who have traded with Cambodia in the past.

[Question] Will our government become involved in such trade?

[Answer] No. We have informed the Cambodian Government that our government will not be responsible for any malpractices that might be committed by Thai traders.

[Question] What if the Cambodian side commits malpractices?

[Answer] We can lodge complaints. We have a liaison office.

[Question] Has there been a reply to the SRV Government's letter of protest regarding anti-Vietnamese activities in Sakon Nakhon, sent through the Thai Red Cross?

[Answer] The SRV Government did not protest through the Thai Red Cross.

[Question] Please explain this matter.

[Answer] The Vietnamese Red Cross probably sent a letter to the Thai Red Cross--to the queen in her position as its president. That is a matter between the Red Cross offices of the two countries.

Regarding the government-to-government handling of this matter, the SRV Government submitted a letter to our ambassador in Vientiane. At present, we contact the SRV Government through its ambassador in Vientiane. The SRV Government stated that it trusts the Thai Government's sincerity in maintaining and promoting friendly relations between the two countries, but there might be some groups which conduct hostile activities. It asks our government to help prevent the recurrence of such incidents and said it knows that our government is making every effort to prevent these incidents.

I myself would like to ask the Thai people to be patient. The refugees have been here for 30 years and suddenly we are attacking them. I don't deny that some Vietnamese refugees are engaging in undesirable activities. If we attack them now, we are falling into the trap of a third party who does not want the refugees to be repatriated. The climate for negotiating the repatriation of the Vietnamese refugees is improving. I ask the Thai people to be patient and to give the government time to proceed with the negotiations. If they do so, their goal of repatriation for the refugees will be realized.
[end recording]

CAMBODIAN BORDER TRADE OFF TO 'QUIET' START

Bangkok POST in English 31 Aug 76 p 3 BK

[Text] Aranyaprathet--The first day of trade between Thailand and Cambodia through this Thai border town yesterday was quiet with only one truck of corrugated iron sheets and engine spareparts entering Cambodia and another truck carrying dry fish coming into Thailand.